

Commencement

I push my hair into place,
arrange the mortarboard atop
my head. Clipping it to strands
of hair weak and unreliable, I don

my robe. Cloaked in black,
long hood trailing, I fidget with
my bangs, the weight of hair heavy,
unfamiliar as my future

commences. We process, we sit, we walk,
happy, solemn, together, flat boards marked
with '92 and names, so family
and guests might cheer on as if we are

marathon runners. My cap is bare,
announcing no name, no year,
not even allergies or blood
type, like the plastic band recently

secured to my wrist. I process
carefully, balancing the mortarboard
clipped tight into strands grown
weak, which tomorrow

or the next day, will break sheer
at the root, fall out in clumps, not one
by one. I will shave my head clean
before the mirror shows

the bare spots. After the ceremony, I
shed each worn layer, strip down
to scalp and skin and wonder alone
how to commence.